

Massachusetts High School Students and Sexual Orientation

Results of the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) is conducted every two years by the Massachusetts Department of Education with funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey monitors behaviors of high school students that are related to leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults in the United States.

The 2013 MYRBS was conducted in 57 randomly selected public high schools. In total, 2718 students in grades 9 - 12 participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. Because of the high student and school response rates, the results of this survey can be generalized to apply to public high school students across Massachusetts.

Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Students

The MYRBS found that:

- 5.0 percent of students surveyed described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
- 7.7 percent of all students described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual *and/or* reported same-sex sexual contact.

Students at Risk

Students who described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were significantly more likely than their heterosexual peers to report attacks, suicide attempts, and drug and alcohol use. When compared to peers, this group was:

- **over five times more likely to have skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe**
- **over eight times more likely to have required medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt**
- **over nine times more likely to have used heroin one or more times during their life**

| Reported Behaviors | GLB Students* | Heterosexual Students |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Attempted suicide in the past year | 24.4% | 4.2% |
| Required medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt | 11.2% | 1.3% |
| Skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe on route to or at school | 15.3% | 2.9% |
| Used heroin one or more times during their life | 7.9% | 0.8% |
| Was in a gang in past year | 13.6% | 6.3% |
| Was bullied at school in the past year | 37.7% | 15.5% |
| Was currently homeless | 10.4% | 3.0% |
| Has ever been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant | 8.3% | 2.3% |

** All differences between GLB Students and Heterosexual Students are statistically significant, $p < .05$.*